APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Given that a limited number of application submissions are expected, the Department will use a single panel of 9 reviewers to review all applications. Each reviewer will independently review and score all applications. If, while reading an application, you identify any areas in which you could have a potential conflict of interest, you are instructed to contact the panel monitors, competition manager, or a member of the Competition Support Team immediately. If program staff, in consultation with OGC's Ethics Division, determines that a conflict exists, the reviewer will be excused and all applications will be assigned to an alternate reviewer.

Use of Alternate Reviewers

Using the Final Reviewer List, program staff will designate a number of peer reviewers to serve as alternate reviewers. All alternate reviewers will be included in the pre-review orientation. Two of the alternate reviewers will be required to review all the applications and enter initial scores and comments into the Application Review System prior to the onsite panel discussion in case they are needed to substitute for a reviewer who is removed or withdraws from the review for any reason. Any other alternates who are needed to substitute for a reviewer will be notified as soon as possible by the competition manager.

Application Review System (ARS)

The Department will utilize a web-based Application Review System (ARS) for the submission of comments and scoring during the review. The review system has been developed by a Department contractor.

Reviewers are required to use the ARS to submit information for the review. This information includes scores for each criterion outlined in the scoring rubrics found in the applications for both categories of grants – the Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant and the High School Course Assessment grant. Reviewers will summarize their comments and provide scores at the criterion level (e.g., (A)(1)). Final scores and comments entered into the ARS will become part of the official application record and will be posted publicly.

Technical Review Form (TRF)

The TRF will include an individual reviewer's scores and comments on an application. A reviewer's preliminary TRF may be used by reviewers as a reference during panel discussions. At the conclusion of the panel discussions, final TRFs will be printed and both the reviewers and the lead panel monitor will review and sign them before submitting them to the Competition Support Team for final review and approval. The signed TRFs will be maintained by program staff as the official record of a reviewer's scores on an application.

Offsite Review and Scoring

Following orientation, reviewers will have approximately four weeks at their home (offsite) to read applications and enter preliminary scores and comments for each application in the Application Review System (ARS). Reviewers are encouraged to make steady progress and keep up with the suggested timetable outlined by the Competition Manager. Preliminary scores and comments must be submitted through the ARS by July 27, 2010.

Panel monitors and other designated program staff will be available by phone, email, and through the ARS to provide logistical guidance on the process and remind reviewers of the suggested timetable and deadlines. Reviewers will be instructed not to consult with one another regarding an application prior to a convening by the panel monitor.

Prior to the established deadline, reviewers may submit preliminary scores and comments at any time. Upon submission, panel monitors (supported by the Competition Manager and Competition Support Team) will review the preliminary comments to ensure that all comments are thorough, clearly address the scoring criteria and justify the reviewer's scores. Panel monitors may request that reviewers clarify or elaborate their comments to more clearly explain a score. Panel monitors will not provide reviewers with evaluative guidance or feedback on the substance of a consortium's application or on the content of their comments beyond guidance necessary to ensure that reviewer comments clearly address the scoring criteria and adequately justify their scores.

Onsite Review and Scoring

Reviewers are required to attend the onsite review. On the first day of the onsite review, program staff will instruct reviewers on the process and procedures for the onsite review and panel discussions. Reviewers will meet and discuss applications according to a pre-determined schedule set by the competition manager. All panel discussions will be conducted in the presence of and monitored by program staff.

Panel Discussion. During the panel discussion, panelists will discuss preliminary scores and comments, focus as they choose to on the areas with greater degrees of variability in scores among panelists, and ask clarifying and probing questions of one another. Panel monitors will remind panelists that their discussions are to help inform each reviewer's understanding of the criteria and their independent scoring, and that the panel is not required or directed to reach consensus through their discussions. Panel monitors will not offer evaluative guidance or feedback on the substance of an application. Panel monitors will facilitate the panel discussion in an effort to ensure that panelists have time to discuss all areas of an application within the allotted timeframe. If questions arise during the panel discussion that require a response from the Competition Manager or members of the Competition Support Team, one of the two assigned panel monitors may leave the discussion room to request clarification.

Finalizing scores and comments. At the conclusion of the panel discussions, reviewers may make revisions to their preliminary comments and scores in the ARS. However, reviewers will be instructed to revise their preliminary comments and scores only if the reviewer has determined that a revision is appropriate. When changes to preliminary comments and scores have been completed, reviewers will print their TRFs which will be reviewed by the lead and/or support panel monitor for completeness and signed. Members of the Competition Support Team will be available to assist panel monitors in reviewing TRFs.

In general, signed TRFs will be submitted to the Competition Manager for review immediately following the conclusion of a panel discussion. The Competition Manager, with assistance from the Competition Support Team and other designated program staff, will provide a final review of all TRFs to ensure that comments are complete, constructive, and sufficiently address the scoring criteria. At any time during the onsite review, the competition manager may contact panel monitors to ask that clarifying revisions be made to reviewer comments.

As outlined in the reviewer guidelines, reviewers will be prohibited from discussing any application outside of the panel discussion room, and will be prohibited from discussing any application unless the assigned panel monitor, Competition Manager, or other designated program staff is present. Reviewers will be prohibited from discussing any application in public spaces.

A review for a particular application will not be considered to be complete until the Competition Manager or his or her designee has determined that scores and comments are entered for all criteria, scores are adequately justified, and each TRF is printed and signed by the reviewer, a panel monitor, and a member of the Competition Support Team.

The onsite review process will not be considered to be complete until all TRFs for each application are fully reviewed and signed. Until each reviewer has had all of his or her TRFs fully reviewed and signed, the reviewer should remain on site.